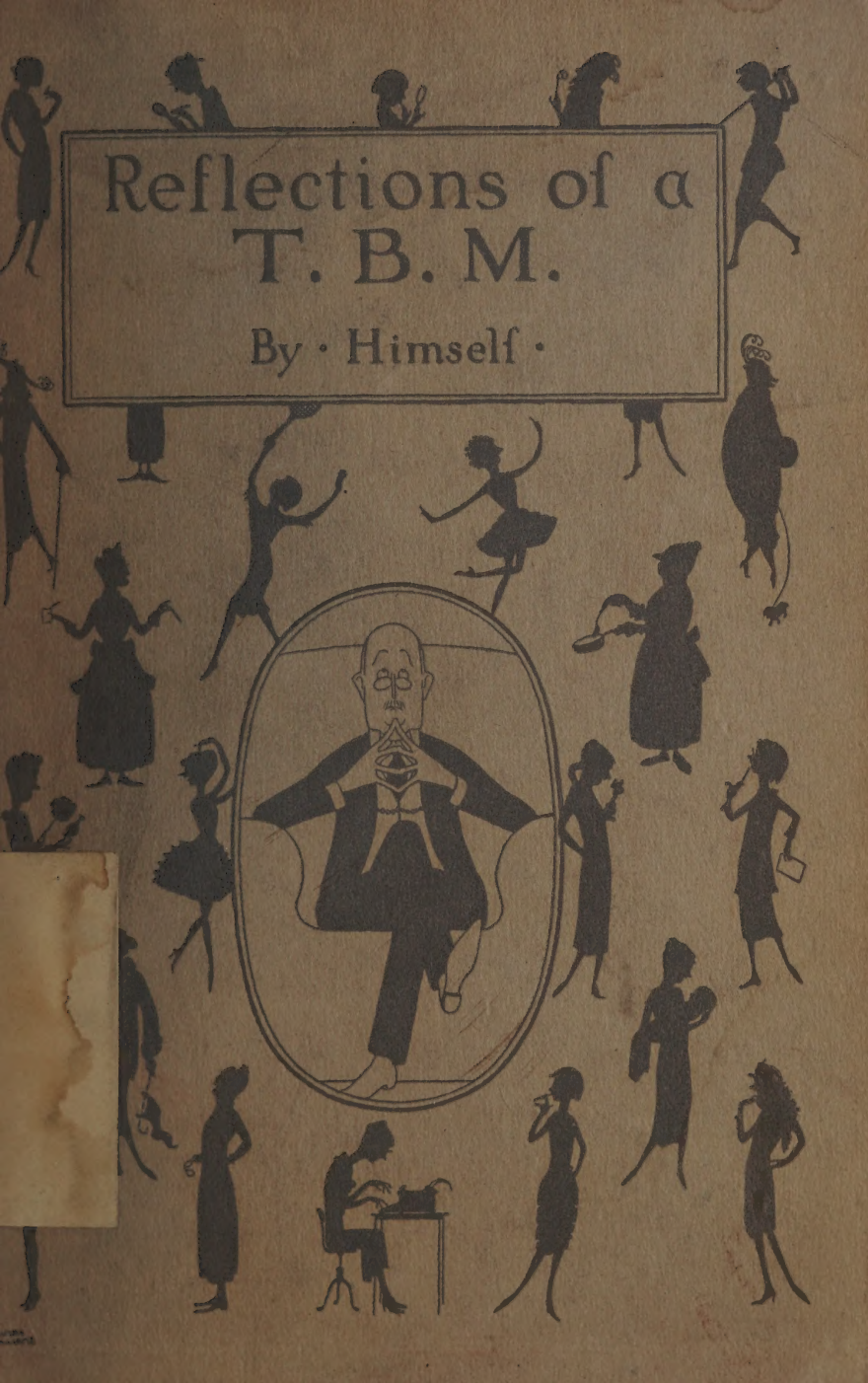
Reflections of a T. B. M.

By · Himself ·



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The Reflections of a T.B.M.

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T. B. M.

DECORATIONS BY GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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TO THE LADIES

ESPECIALLY TO THOSE

WHO TAKE THESE PAPERS

WITH A

GRAIN OF SALT

PREFACE

THE T. B. M. has been pictured for years by *Life* as a bald-headed individual who frequents the front row of a musical revue. I have sometimes felt that *Life* assumed that the poorer the show the more the T. B. M. enjoyed it.

As T. B. M. merely stands for Tired Business Man, I have ventured in these pages to stand for him in a new light. These Reflections upon the fair sex must not be considered as reflections at all. Heaven forbid that I should pose as one superior to those members of the sex which now marches onward invincible alike to law and order as — we knew them once. No, these papers are merely thumbnail sketches of feminine traits written at random after the day (and the man) is done.

T. B. M.

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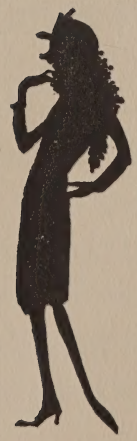
A WIFE'S BEST FRIEND



The Reflections of a T. B. M.

* * *

A WIFE'S BEST FRIEND

WHEN a man marries! Ah, that was a time when the T. B. M. did not exist. He was still Young, Hopeful, a Gay Lochinvar, following Thackeray's advice to his young nephew, and he looked upon life pretty much as a young man might look upon a new suit of clothes just home from the tailor's, as something made exclusively for him and exclusively his own.

And those first joyous years of exclusive dual contentment carried out admirably the idea. The old world revolved not altogether upon its axis, but about them, bringing friends and families together in a kaleidoscopic fashion from which pleasant, changing groupings formed patterns on their hearth-

rug. Yes, there is more than a grain of truth in the familiar phrase of "marrying into a family," for first and last the family clutter up the marital relations oftener than not with the best intentions and with the most deplorable results; and, conversely, with hostile intentions and with ultimate beneficial results; for the world is as full of contradictions as it is of human beings. But there is one particular species, which stands forth as *sui generis* — a wife's best friend. You know her. She starts by calling you by your Christian name upon introduction. She declares that you are going to be the best of friends because Sue is the dearest thing in the world to her and of course to me. She goes on for some time, working out variations of this theme until you become a trifle jumpy. Then she starts to dissect Sue's character, at first pointing out her many perfections, but working up to a few less

complimentary traits. Certain of these I have already recognized, but naturally I fail to agree, and show perhaps a little too plainly that we have gone far enough. This has a chilling effect upon the conversation, and we wander off into a discussion of the relative advantages of a flat in town over a small house in the country and the attendant advantages and expenses of each. In fact, we go into such detail that I begin to wonder whom I am going to marry after all, Sue or her best friend, or whether this best friend is not a general manager in disguise come to run our affairs for the love of Sue.

After this first meeting I find myself dejected, and firm upon one thing. Sue and her best friend were classmates at college. I had not previously known many college girls, or, at least, I had not known whether or no my friends of the opposite sex were college-bred or not, for as I saw them singly,

the college stamp was not apparent, but putting them together produced the necessary chemical alloy which brought clearly in evidence the dear old Alma Mater spirit to such a degree that, narrow-minded male that I was, I immediately came to the conclusion that, while college is all very well for boys, it was not at all necessary or becoming to girls. That started it, and I have suffered ever since; in fact, the symptoms of the T. B. M. might be said to have first appeared at this time.

The best friend reverted to formalities and I became "Mr. X." from then on and for some years to come.

Sue was never disloyal to me by word or gesture, but I knew she condemned my attitude toward her college days.

We often sat reading at night when the telephone would ring. Naturally, I was the one to answer, and many a night I recog-

nized the voice of my wife's best friend in the "Hello, is Sue there?" — without the slightest evidence that she knew my voice or of my existence. Then would follow a long conversation, in which Sue would lay plans for a reunion the following week in town, or together they would agree to pass the night with Mildred in ———, collegian Mildred being another of the same vintage.

These talks would always occur when I happened to be in the most absorbing portion of a thriller or engaged upon writing my weekly family letter, and of course it knocked my mind into a cocked hat.

There were other times when my wife's best friend came to us for a few days. Generally these visits were planned while I was on a business trip.

"The B.F. is coming on Tuesday, so you need not worry about my being lonely," Sue would remark demurely. Sue has both a

sense of proportion and a sense of humor. It is a great relief in a wife.

"Righto. Give the college yell for me, and give three long meow cats at the end instead of Tiger," I would reply facetiously.

Plans have a way, however, of miscarrying — the best of them; and not long ago one of these business trips fell through at the last moment and I came home to dinner to find my wife and her best friend cozily ensconced in our bedroom, both in kimonos, and both eating crackers and sipping chocolate in recollection of the good old college sprees.

Great was the consternation thereon. The B.F. with a dignity worthy of a Portia unfolded herself from the sofa and, with a "This *is* a pleasant surprise, Robert," moved majestically to the door, in one hand her cup and saucer and in the other a hot-water bottle, her steps noiseless. I afterwards found her slippers on the sofa.

My wife was convulsed. "Why on earth did n't you telephone?" she exclaimed between sobs of laughter.

"Oh, I thought I would like to see what these college debauches were like," I murmured, "and now I imagine I am out a dinner."

"Not a bit of it," Sue declared stoutly. "In a jiffy we'll have a high old meal for you." And she did.

What a Best Friend needs is a husband. I discovered this when Sue's collegiate better half took Francis Bayard into partnership. Poor girl, she had clung to the college game in self-defense and because of a certain shyness which, I imagine, in some people assumes a peculiarly offensive tinge of precocity. In any event, as Mrs. Bayard she became human to me, and since that time we have been able to laugh about the good old college days without a taint of bitterness.

Sue is of course delighted at the outcome, for she is devoted to Mary Bayard, and while she used to joke over our incompatibility, she felt it none the less.

And yet we have our discussions, serious ones, over the question of college for the girls, for we have a daughter and some day the issue must be met. I still am of the opinion that a girl should learn something besides those subjects taught in the average school for young girls. My daughter must be self-reliant (Heaven knows they are that in these days, all of them!) and she must be self-supporting in case the need comes. But that does not in my opinion (the opinion of a T. B. M.) require a college education. Sue declares it does. The judgment must be left to you, dear reader.

THE MODERN MOTHER

THE MODERN MOTHER

"Oh, you modern mother!" exclaimed Aunt Betsy, who had come to stay with us as a matter of convenience to her — but not to me, I reflected miserably, after the third day.

"What's modern about mother?" I asked mildly. Being but a T. B. M., I had thought of mothers as perennially and even epochally the same since Eve. To me mothers always seemed to do just exactly the same thing, namely, to acquire children and bring them up. There was the period of two-hour feedings and then three. There were bathing episodes. There were what are known as "bubbles," which require the offspring to assume a reclining position face down and to submit to a gentle agitating motion until said bubbles disappeared.

And later there was the period of rubbers

and overcoats worn at appropriate times, and so on up to curtain lectures upon boyish pranks or hoydenish behavior, but always the same.

"But, no," exclaimed Aunt Betsy, "it is not the same at all! Dear little Dickey is crying his heart out upstairs and your wife" (Aunt Betsy is my aunt, not Sue's) "pays no attention to him. Now in my day —" Here I was startled, for Aunt Betsy is a maiden lady of somewhat advanced age and I was dreading a revelation — "In my day, when Sister Ann's children were babies, crying was considered a danger signal. That was the time to watch for symptoms."

"Symptoms?" asked my wife, just coming into the room.

"Yes," I replied, a little wearily; "Aunt Betsy says when a child cries you should look for symptoms."

"Nonsense," said Sue. "Dickey-Bird's all

right. All he wants is to be taken up and petted, and I am trying to cure him. I don't believe in pampering children. Spoil them in the first five years of their lives and they will be spoiled for all time." Sue went humming out toward the kitchen unconcerned at Aunt Betsy's glare. But, being a T. B. M., I also escaped. It was not until Dickey was ten that Aunt Betsy came for another visit.

At this time Dickey was an adventurous spirit. We were having some difficulty with him, I admit. In fact, as all know, the T. B. M. is at his worst just after returning from the office and it was at such times that Dickey's exploits were narrated and punishment accorded.

Upon this particular afternoon, it was a white, pinched-faced Aunt Betsy who opened the door for me and who gasped out the mysterious words, "Dickey's gone and done it this time!"

"Gone and done what?" I asked apprehensively.

"I told him not to go!" wailed the old lady.

"Go where?" I demanded.

"But he won't mind me!" she continued.

Just then my wife came in from the kitchen bearing a hot-water bag filled from the kettle.

"What's this all about?" I said somewhat fiercely.

"Dickey fell through the ice and got soaked," she replied calmly. "But it's nothing except that he was scared to death, and I'm glad of it." And off she went to administer to the culprit.

Later in our room she gave me a report of the casualty. It appeared that Dickey and his two cronies had decided to try skating. It was their first appearance, encouraged by a Christmas gift of skates a fortnight before.

She had advised against it, as she told the boys the ice was not thick enough, but, boy-like, they thought they knew better. Sue had not forbidden Dickey, for she is a great believer in education by experience and she knew that the little pond was shallow and that nothing serious could happen. So she had watched the proceedings from behind the curtains of her upper window, while Aunt Betsy in agony viewed the same proceedings from the living-room. No ill effects were apparent next morning, when Dickey, in excellent spirits and with the consciousness of having been through a real experience, trudged happily to school.

"An only child," Sue always asserted, "is more to be pitied than any other type of human being." And so Dickey was followed by Mary Bird two years younger; and the Shrimp, alias James Rollins, the following year — to be more exact upon the 4th day

of March at the convenient hour of three in the morning, a morning by the way upon which he was not expected and, consequently, the household was thrown into a state of excitement bordering upon panic. It was only the calm and presence of mind of Sue herself which brought order to the chaotic, kimono-ed group which constituted our ménage. Many an evening, being a T. B. M., I have berated the telephone as the invention of a brilliant but besotted gossip, but upon this occasion I blessed the man who harnessed the sound waves and drove them by wire.

Such was the Shrimp's coming, and his exploits up to the present moment have been somewhat similar in their inopportuneness. For instance, on the morning of our moving to the country, when everything was packed, the house ready for closing, and the motor at the door, he announced that he had swal-

lowed a pin. Sue was ready for the emergency and produced dry bread from her handbag, intended for a midday lunch, telephoned the doctor to be on call in case of trouble, and then proceeded to carry out our plan as if nothing had happened; and nothing did happen, except that Shrimp now proudly exhibits the pin stuck through a ribbon, as the relic of a past achievement.

But that was long ago, and many a childish event has stirred the household and strained the nerves since those early days; and yet we continue to live along in normal grooves with Mother Sue in charge, yet wonderfully free to do an astounding number of things which Aunt Betsy, good old soul, who will never worry again, would have declared to be no part of a mother's duties.

Sue plays a good game of golf, she enjoys bridge, as a pianist she is no mean performer. The amount of time she spends on church

matters leads me to believe that religion after all is not on the wane, and as secretary of the local woman's club she has been wonderfully successful in securing interesting speakers for the various meetings — and, to balance these more serious occupations, she dances divinely. Even a T. B. M. is no longer tired when he has good music, a good floor, elbow-room, and Sue for a partner. Here again Aunt Betsy would have murmured and remurmured that a mother's place was in her home; but Sue applied her recreation to her children's upbringing with good effect and secured a diversion which enabled her to carry on with youth in her heart and spring in her step, to say nothing of a wealth of brown hair with not a suspicion of gray and a complexion as refreshing and colorful as that of her daughter.

Dickey has been her companion and opponent at golf since he was twelve, with the

result that his handicap was lower than any boy of his age.

Mary-Bird played the piano, albeit her repertoire consisted of rag-time music you could not forget and verses you should not remember; the Shrimp roared out the Sunday hymns as if he were sitting in the cheering section of a Harvard and Yale football game and victory depended upon vocal strength. We played bridge together, and the speakers at the woman's club meetings, usually coming to us afterwards for dinner, gave us a glimpse of the outer world and a desire for knowledge which acted as a spur to every member of the family.

Yes, perhaps Aunt Betsy was right after all in a way. There are mothers and mothers, and the modern mother is perhaps different from Eve in certain aspects, but they are after and above all just mothers, and the finest thing on earth, God bless them!

THE LADY NEXT DOOR

THE LADY NEXT DOOR

I DO not know the Lady Next Door; neither does my wife. One rarely ever knows the Lady Next Door in the city, and in the country, as there are no next doors, there are no females of this species. Instead there are neighbors, and this sizes up fairly accurately the difference between town and country life; or, at least, that is the way my wife gauges it. I am merely a T. B .M., and in matters social I am scarcely more than what is known in stage circles as "first walking gentleman."

In the country there is a quality of loyalty either to the town or to the people, if we except our relatives (of whom at times the less said the better), which excuses much, but overlooks nothing; whereas in the city no excuse is adequate and yet much is overlooked, and among other people who are

overlooked are those numerous ladies who live next door to us and to our friends. And when I say overlooked, I speak with a dual meaning.

I have often wondered, both as a T. B. M. and as an admirer of architecture, who was the happy originator of the bow window, or, as we now speak of it, the bay window. We think of Christopher Wren when we see a fine specimen of a certain type of church architecture. Bulfinch is a household word in New England. McKim, Mead and White, and Burnham typify all that is best in our modern building and planning in this country; but who was it who invented the bay window? — for his name should go along with those of Edison and Bell in providing an invention which has enabled the opposite sex to observe and from observation to relate gossip which, in past generations, was as a sealed book.

In this particular case I happen to know all about the Lady Next Door. Not because I have committed any indiscretion which would mar these printed pages, but because of my wife's assiduous use of our bay window. My secret conviction is that I have missed a trick in not knowing the Lady Next Door. That her acquaintance is a pleasure is daily evidenced, for she entertains at a prodigious rate. Any one who reads the social columns of our Sunday papers can tell you that we have a privileged seat at all of her "at homes," for our point of vantage gives us a "close-up" of every one who enters her vestibule.

I have seen the Lady Next Door so many times, and have heard my wife read about her so often from the papers, that she is a very vivid personality to me, and so, as I sit in my window smoking a cigarette with my evening paper on my knees, the way a

T. B. M. should sit after a misspent day, I see her coming up the street at a swinging gait in a walking-suit which my wife declares to be quite new. I suspected it myself, as the skirt seemed more abbreviated than those which I am accustomed to view, and for this reason, as well as others sufficiently good, I remain planted in my chair and allow my paper to drop to the floor. The Lady Next Door is tall and slim; not taller than a woman should be — her eyes would not meet mine on a level and I am not a tall man; so that as girls go in these days of feminine monsters, she is not tall, but her figure gives me the impression of height, and with it she has the buoyancy and spirit of a young girl; and yet here again I am told by my wife that she is not young, at least not less than thirty-seven. I do not know why my wife should not have conceded thirty-five as an easier and rounder figure, but she would not.

But in my poor T. B. M. opinion she would pass for thirty or even under, as she stands on the pavement talking to an elderly woman who has come from the other direction.

The aforesaid walking-suit is of elephant gray, close-fitting and delightfully plain, and her furs — quite unnecessary — are of silver fox and must have cost something. I think it wiser not to ask my wife the approximate price or even to mention furs, for we have recently considered the purchase of a set and I have determined to give it up. Her hat is a sort of three-cornered affair of black velvet, very chic and very plain, and, therefore, I am told, very expensive; and speaking of hats reminds me of her other extremities, which I feel sure would rejoice Mr. Coles Phillips, who for years has stirred the American people and brought customers to the manufacturer of silk hose.

It is said that to place the figure before

the face is a common masculine trait, but as I am a T. B. M. this hardly requires an explanation. The Lady Next Door is so invariably animated that it is difficult to catch her features, one by one, long enough in repose to give a proper sense of their proportions. To mention wavy brown hair, which my wife says is a perpetual wave, does not to my mind detract from its character. To speak of the pink-and-white qualities of her complexion neither affirms nor denies the use of cosmetics. All I know is that she is remarkably pretty, and as I look out upon the scene and observe John Hamilton, an old friend of mine, stop and join the ladies and see the delightful smile with which she welcomes him, I begin to wonder why my wife should not at least call and pave the way for the T. B. M. But she won't — at least I know she will not if I ask her — and yet she admits that the Lady Next Door never affects

the silly fashions which mark the type of woman to which she claims the Lady Next Door belongs. For instance, she does not wear little puffs of hair over her ears or powder her nose on the street, nor does she go to the other extreme and lug a chow of a dog about in her arms, and ride astride every morning at nine.

In short, to me as I sit in my window a T. B. M. at low ebb, I consider the Lady Next Door as a lost opportunity until the idea occurs to me that John Hamilton can arrange the whole thing for me. I say nothing of this to my wife, at present at least, and pick up my evening paper to indicate that the Lady Next Door has no further interest for me.

This all happened a year or more ago, even longer, now I think of it, for time flies and children do too after a certain period, the

period which poets of the older order invariably liken to the departure of the feathered flock from the ancestral nest. It was on account of our children that we sold our town house, including the bay window, and took up our residence some fifteen miles out of the city, just escaping the suburbs, and settling into a long, rangey country house with a fine view of the hills, an excellent school for the children, and pleasant neighbors, many of whom we had known for years.

A T. B. M. is always unmistakable, but in the country, especially at week-ends, he is less objectionable than at any other time, more amenable and more able to endure domestic shocks.

Upon arriving home for lunch on Saturday of the particular week in question, my wife met me in our hall and I could see by the vivid little patches of red in each cheek that something had excited her.

"What's the matter, Bunny dear?" I cried. I always call my wife "Bunny dear" in times of stress or when in argumentative vein. I don't know how I came to do it, for it is a silly, foolish name, too commonplace for words, but it has become a habit, just like the movies or the League of Nations, no better, no worse.

"Nothing is the matter," replied Sue; "but who do you suppose bought the Coltings house and is already in it, bag and baggage?"

"Can't imagine," I answered, "unless it's William Jennings Bryan or Theda Bara."

"It's the Lady Next Door," declared Sue, with all the stage presence to which such a statement was entitled.

Remembering the far-famed story of doubtful origin upon the recent visit of the Queen of Belgium, I could only echo faintly, "Sue, you've said a mouthful."

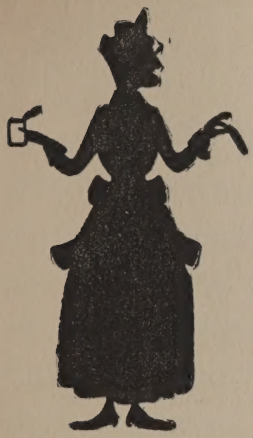
At lunch I mustered up my courage and asked my wife if she had thought of calling upon our new neighbor.

"Of course," she replied, "we must make it as pleasant as possible for her. You remember how much we appreciated how people tumbled in upon us when we first came here?"

"Yes," I remarked, "and most of them came in couples. What should you think of our strolling over there together this afternoon?"

"Fine." (Sue was becoming almost slangy, from the children.)

And so it came to pass that the Lady Next Door is now one of our neighbors and quite the most intimate of Sue's friends. What curious pranks propinquity can play and what wonderful things Dame Nature accomplishes!



THE TRAINED NURSE

THE TRAINED NURSE

Now that the various members of my family are all downstairs, eating three perfectly good meals a day at the usual hours set aside by habit for digestion and contentment, or indigestion and torment, as the case and cook may decree, I can once more look upon life with the calm assurance that for the time being we are free from that species of highly organized modern, the trained nurse.

I admit at the start that nurses are indispensable, efficient, a solace and a comfort. I agree to their presence, welcome their coming, speed their parting, and obey their slightest whim; but I have at all times the feeling that instead of being master in my own house, I am really inferior to the hired man, who makes himself doubly useful by bringing up the wood both when it is needed and when it is not.

The ordinary man of thirty-five who is blessed with a wife and the ordinary number of children is certain to have encountered a number of trained nurses. It may be said with perfect propriety that he has become intimately associated with them. As a matter of fact they are ubiquitous, gliding softly about by day in immaculate white (frequently laundered at considerable expense to himself) and by night in gayly fashioned kimonos, often of a pattern which sets one's teeth on edge. They glide with equal assurance and modesty in either garb, and I for one am at all times aware of their entire disregard of my presence.

This winter might well be termed an open season for trained nurses. At least it turned out to be so in my family, for one after another nearly every member of the family was at one time laid low. It was of course hard for all of them, but it was also hard for me.

In the first place, my business affairs were trying in the extreme. No one who has anything to do with a large force of people has escaped what the world calls "labor troubles" and gloats over, and what I call the greatest menace which has come to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In the second place, the expenses of living were so closely mated to the limits of my income that any extraordinary expense toppled the balance over into the debit column of my household ledger with all the attendant worries, with which again the ordinary business man of thirty-five or thereabouts is equally familiar.

And lastly, I was genuinely concerned over the health of my small son, who failed to rally from his operation as rapidly as we all had hoped.

After what seemed an interminable period of financial drain and complete occupation

of my Lares and Penates, the house once more became normal, and I could review at leisure the physical and mental eccentricities of the quartet of nurses who had wintered in the front guest-room, newly papered in delicate lavender, with yellow chintzes, and filled with the choicest of our collection of antique furniture.

The first was Miss Barbara Q. Winston. I remember it in detail because we called her "question" in the sanctity of our own apartment. Her questions put the ordinary four-year-old to shame. I also remembered the name because of her weekly checks.

Miss Winston was one of those placid creatures who are a real comfort in times of serious illness when quiet is necessary and watchfulness imperative; but with convalescence the placidity became irksome. She seemed anchored to the place, and her conversation bravely attempted and hon-

estly intended got upon my nerves. It was prefaced invariably by "I don't suppose."

"I don't suppose you had any trouble in getting home this evening," I remember her saying one night. Now as a matter of fact I did not have any trouble in getting home, but it was the first time for a week that I had not had a beast of a time, for we had experienced an old-fashioned blizzard. Her question made it out that homecoming was an easy matter, while I felt it to be a positive triumph and an unique event to come out by train and arrive on time.

One morning she came smilingly to breakfast, and after consuming her grapefruit broke the silence by saying, "I don't suppose it would be of any use to ask the doctor to come in this morning." My breakfast stuck in my throat, my wife grew pale and rose unsteadily. We imagined the worst.

"Why, what's the trouble?" I managed to gasp.

"Oh, nothing," she replied sweetly; "William's temperature is normal, and I thought if the doctor came he might let him up part of the day."

And so it went on until the day of departure, when her last words were, "I don't suppose we shall meet again"; and even then I did not dare agree with her, but my fervent wishes echoed her thought.

Mary Boyle was a fat girl with a beautiful complexion and a voice like a cyclone. Why she ever took up nursing I cannot imagine, and those who permitted her to practice the art should have been treated as criminals. Her métier should have been in the automatic basement of a department store, where her qualities of speech and personal strength would have given her a strangle hold on any bargain hunter.

Mealtimes with trained nurses stand unrivaled among the social amenities of the

present day. To a polite query on my part as to her home she boomed:

"My people belong in Kalamazoo. Father's in the building trade. Used to be a mason, but now he's a contractor."

I congratulated her upon her good fortune and mumbled something about the rapidity with which he seemed to ascend the ladder of fortune.

"He don't climb no ladders," she countered with some spirit. "He sits in an office just like you does. We've got an elegant house he built himself. Just got it done the last time I was home. It's real cute, all stucco and fine plate-glass windows. Everything is up to the minute" — and then she went into minute details as to the bathroom fixtures, which gave us an indelible image of that highly useful apartment of which one resembles another in this country *ad infinitum*.

Miss Boyle came during a period of con-

valescence. Heaven knows what we should have done with her, or what she would have done, if our little patient had been seriously ill at the time, for her boisterous personality and lack of culture were a torture to us all. I know she was an exception to the general rule, and I cursed our luck each evening as I journeyed dismally home from the office.

Our third visitation was on the occasion of Mary Bird's measles. It seemed to me hard lines that Mary Bird, aged ten, should have measles this year of all years, but it was infinitely worse for her, poor little mite, for it came the day before the last dancing class. It had been a particularly trying day at the office, and I came home with visions of a quiet evening unruffled by domestic trials, to find my wife on the sofa completely discouraged, and Miss Wheatherby installed upstairs. The "$35.00 per" was apparently going on forever.

Measles is a nuisance, but it is not so serious but that the family can take its meals at the accustomed hours, and so at dinner Miss Wheatherby made her appearance and I made the most courteous obeisance I could muster.

Miss Wheatherby was efficiency itself, but as a dinner companion she was a disaster. Her whole life, it seemed, was enveloped in her work, and at table she gave us, one upon another, in terrifying clearness the accounts of her latest victims.

With soup she told us that she had just come from an appendix victim, who had been in the hospital nine weeks with complications which appeared to me unbelievable.

During the meat course she touched upon the vitality of an old woman who had undergone an operation for gallstones, and for some reason which I did not understand the

operation was not successful and had to be repeated; and at dessert she told with real relish of an operation she had witnessed where the patient had a tumor on the brain which was successfully removed through the nose.

For two days my digestive organs suffered acutely, and then I gave up coming home to meals until Miss Wheatherby, bag in hand and check in pocketbook, took her departure in pursuit of some unfortunate with a symptom worthy of her chronicle.

With the measles over and spring in full sway, we felt that peace and quiet had come to our household; but not so. James, our third and youngest, aged four, was an adventurer. He had found an old swing in the back yard, and in propelling himself through the air at a moment when his nurse was presumably watching for the postman, he lost his balance and broke his arm in two places.

That was the occasion for the installation of Miss Grace Minturn.

The last catastrophe came as the proverbial last straw for my wife, who took to her bed for a week with sheer exhaustion and a touch of acute indigestion. Consequently, Miss Minturn and I had it all to ourselves at dinner each night, and I confess it was not bad at all.

I rather fancy Miss Minturn was a favorite at her hospital, and I suspect that she had given some of the younger doctors a "real time." She reminded me in appearance of the Red Cross nurse in one of the war posters. In short, Miss Minturn was a peach, and we conversed upon the latest jazz and never referred by word or thought to the bitter struggle of suffering mankind.

Toward the end of the week there came a warm, beautiful day, which might have passed for summer. It seemed to me hard

that Miss Minturn should not have a bit of fresh air and so I suggested a little spin in the motor after dinner. As James was sleeping the sleep of the innocent, she gratefully accepted, and we ran through the Park System and remained out for an hour or so. I found her a delightful companion.

The next morning, to my great surprise, my wife joined us at breakfast, declaring that she felt quite fit again. I was delighted. That evening when I returned Miss Minturn was no more. My wife merely said that she and our nursemaid were now quite capable of taking care of James and that it hardly seemed necessary any longer to pay for a trained nurse unless I enjoyed this form of extravagance. There was the least glint in her eye, but enough to keep me silent. And so ended our winter of trained specialists.

THE SHOW GIRL

THE SHOW GIRL

THE T. B. M. was first discovered in a front-row seat at a musical comedy. It must not, however, be imagined that this is his habitual or permanent haunt. It is simply his method of passing away the time when he is on a business trip, or when he is kept in town late by pressure of work, or when he has friends from other cities to entertain, or when he is fed up with the sort of dinner which is served upon cook's night out, or when a few classmates decide to have a reunion, or when — but, nevertheless, it is not his invariable custom to occupy this position, believe it or not as you may.

Some assert that the T. B. M. first discovered musical comedy, others that the T. B. M. was first discovered and that, as a result, musical comedies came into being,

like Adam and Eve. I am rather of the opinion that the T. B. M. came first, as I can never imagine a world without this ornament of the male sex, but the present-day musical comedy rather bears out the Eve theory, for the producers are striving their best to reproduce the original and they are close upon success.

While the T. B. M. rejoices in the thickness of his pocketbook, which permits the purchase of a front-row seat or a Rolls-Royce (they are both about the same price now), he has passed the age which hastens from the lobby to the stage door and from there in company with another to one of those hospitable caravansaries, where by depositing a small fortune one may secure a grapefruit salad and something in a glass which may kill at sight. Yes, he has passed that age, but he still looks upon it with great interest and a certain regret, and if now and

then he is asked to join a little party of this general character, he invariably accepts. Before doing so, however, he is apt to step into the washroom adjust his tie, pull down his waistcoat, and arrange his hair in the most approved and camouflaged manner.

Most men will carry to the grave a lingering appetite for the companionship of beautiful women. The day for them of chivalry is over, but the recollection, only too vivid, of pretty faces, merry banter, a tinkle of glass, and a twang of string as the music floats about them, never loses its allurement. So the T. B. M. curses himself for an old fool and joins the table, where he is introduced to Tansey Tangerine, whose "pleased to meet you" rather jolts his sensibilities. After an heroic effort at a conversation which no vocal power on earth could coax from the limits bounded by Seventh Avenue on the one side, Sixth on the other, and ranging up

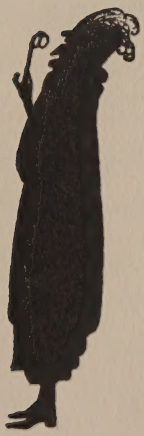
and down from the Circle to Forty-Second Street, the T. B. M. decides that a dance is the only thing to relieve the situation. While not as young as he once was, the T. B. M. is by no manner of means tottering to the grave. His tottering is decidedly up to date, so that Tansey is forced to remark, "Say, you're simply great!" — but she spoils it by adding, "Gee, I wish the other boys could dance same as you," with which she resignedly composes her cheek against his as if preparing for a night snooze.

This exploit on the part of Tansey galvanizes our friend into action. What a blamed old fool he is! Here in public dancing fatuously around with a show girl in a manner which only the week before he has criticized as obnoxious in the extreme. What the —— was he coming to?

It must stop, and it does stop when the music ends, but be it said, alas, for our

T. B. M. that the manner of the dance remains the same until the last bar is played. It is only then that he makes his excuses, and, lighting a cigar, walks back to his hotel, cursing inwardly.

A MOTHER-IN-LAW



A MOTHER-IN-LAW

JUST before my marriage, I heard a great many stories about Mothers-in-Law. It was about the time when cartoonists and penny-a-liners were evidently hard put to it for material. There was a wave of mother-in-law propaganda which rolled across our continent, gathering momentum from every little daily paper in our land until it reached my humble lodgings, where my associates, knowing of my engagement, directed the current straight at me upon all occasions. Those were the days before I became a T. B. M. I was strong in confidence, exuberant in spirits, immune from raggings, and, being thoroughly and completely in love, I regarded my mother-in-law-to-be with awe tinctured by respect and, withal, with fascination. She told me such wonderful stories

of my Sue, from her baby days, through the Tomboy age, to maidenhood. I drank it in, all of it, and a lot more; for I heard all about Sue's brothers and sisters and others of the clan, and just then the Hood family was the one topic which possessed the deepest interest for me.

I still regard my mother-in-law with awe. That fund of family information has been tapped continuously from that day to this, but the supply is apparently as copious today as then. While I have absorbed a vast amount of information regarding the entire tribe of Hoods, I regret to say that an equal if not a greater mass of genealogical data has passed me by for sheer lack of mental capacity. Mrs. Hood (my wife playfully calls her "Motherhood," but I do not) visits us at certain intervals — at Christmas-time, in the early summer, and late fall — one week or thereabouts at each visit.

It is at such times, after the family has retired, that I sit and wonder how a man can change so completely as I have done, and my reflections are saddening. Mrs. Hood must be the same, only more so. I recall certain of her family stories which I can trace back to the early days when I first heard them. They are the same stories. One I remember about Uncle John. Uncle John was in love at that time with Aunt Martha, and they had "philopened" together. Uncle John, as was his wont, called upon Aunt Martha every Sunday afternoon, and he had conceived the idea of ringing the bell, knowing Aunt Martha would open the door, and of shouting "Philopena" into her ears before she had time to know who it was. As it happened, Aunt Martha knew who was there — and who would not under the circumstances? And so she spent some time preening in front of her mirror before answer-

ing the bell. In fact, she was so long in coming that Uncle John, restless and uneasy, took to studying the signs upon the other side of the street. One sign in particular attracted his attention. It was

CASSIDY

Caskets and Coffins

Euphonious and rather fascinating, he thought, as well as gruesome. Martha must move away. The neighborhood was distinctly on the wane. "Cassidy — Caskets and Coffins," he repeated thoughtfully. Just then the door opened, and caught, as it were, unawares, Uncle John shouted at the top of his voice, CASSIDY, to which Aunt Martha replied at leisure, "Philopena!"

It was a perfectly good story, and I remember laughing with a gentle and agreeable politeness. Since then I have heard it several times, and I have been known to tell it myself. Mrs. Hood got it off to-night as a

brand-new one, and I wondered what there was so devilishly funny about it. Yes, it is I who have changed, and that is the sad thing about it to me.

Mrs. Hood, when she is *not* reminiscing, has another trait which now and then comes to the surface. She has a way of seeing resemblances. She has been with us only two days this visit. On the first night we were all having dinner, or supper, or tea — whatever you call it when the children sit up and the cook goes out. Mary Bird was in high feather and excited over Grandma's arrival, and her little face was flushed and rosy.

"Robert," exclaimed Mrs. Hood, "I do believe Mary is going to be a real Hood!" (Of course I took no exception to that.) "James used to say that his mother's profile was like a Grecian cameo, so perfectly chiseled were her features, while her complexion

was so clear and white that she was known throughout her life as the Lily of the Valley." Poor Mary's little snub nose and her ruddy complexion were but a background for the two wide-gazing blue eyes which took in these remarks against the time when she could dart to the mirror to see how the Lily of the Valley really looked.

At another time, Mrs. Hood took me to task. "Robert," she remarked with genuine concern, "you ought to take better care of yourself. You are growing more and more to look like your Uncle Harry. It won't do to get too stout." Uncle Harry died of apoplexy, so that this resemblance stirred in me no enthusiasm.

"I believe the time has come when you should seriously consider going on a diet," she continued. "Both James and his sister Amelia tried a vegetarian diet and were much benefited."

"But they both had rheumatism," I interrupted.

"That may be, but it did them good just the same," asserted my mother-in-law confidently. "Then Billy Severance, you remember, had to give up sugar and breadstuffs and all starchy things."

"He was threatened with diabetes," I explained.

"He actually had it," replied Mrs. Hood triumphantly; "but before he died the diet had cut his weight down amazingly."

"I'll do something," I promised, beginning to fidget over the prospects of symptoms which accompany increasing weight.

"That's right," replied Mrs. Hood cheerfully. "I knew Sue's husband resembled her father in being able to rise above temptations of the flesh. What a man he was! What a life he led!"

"What a life, indeed!" I thought.

The climax of this particular visit came later in the week, when Sue was stricken with a sudden and severe case of the "flu." Mrs. Hood was staying over to go to the Beveridge tea. Mrs. Beveridge was the daughter of an old friend, and, as my mother-in-law had declared upon several occasions, Lila Beveridge was almost a daughter. "Her mother and I went to school together, and for four summers we lived side by side at Rye. If ever two girls were more alike, I should like to know it," she often remarked. No, I will take that back. She did not remark — she ejaculated; for this statement was given with such strident conviction that it awoke memories of early tales I had heard about Lila's family. As a matter of fact, Lila's mother had made what was known in those days as a brilliant match. There was plenty of money culled from the successful sale of a patent medicine by Grandfather

Brodkin, who was never mentioned, and there was social distinction comfortably secured from the ancestral line of Brewsters; but there had been no love, and an overdose of alcohol had done for Lila's father, who passed the last years of his life in an asylum. Mrs. Brewster, Lila's mother, still in the social whirl, was considered a cold proposition, and she certainly showed no outward indication of having treasured the recollection of those four summers at Rye other than by an occasional card of invitation to some large function which is recorded in the papers as one of those events at which all the world was present.

Sue, issuing commands from her bed, much as General Shafter in the Spanish War led his forces from his hammock, dictated that I should accompany her mother to the tea. Of all abominations, a tea to the T. B. M. is the most revolting. The female who first

promulgated this form of social torture must have been educated in the Black Hole of Calcutta. We went together, and by a miracle we returned together, but in the interval I allowed the gyrating mass of humanity to carry me as it chose. An occasional eddy, or the meeting of cross-currents, would bring me face to face with some one of the opposite sex, and then would take place a hackneyed form of conversation which went like this:

I (with enthusiasm), "Well, well, well, you here!"

She (with equal enthusiasm), "Of course, but how about you? This *is* an honor. Lila must be an old flame. Where is Sue?"

I (still with enthusiasm), "Sue's got the flu." Then, remembering the enthusiasm, "But she's quite all right."

She (with less enthusiasm), "Oh, I'm so sorry." Then, glancing about to see the new fall styles, "Give her my love and tell her

she must be all right for Friday's luncheon — sewing circle, you know."

I (finding that the currents were cross-circuited), "Did you have a good summer?"

She (still looking about), "Perfectly splendid. We were at North East, you know"; and then, after a pause, "Where were you?"

I (beginning to look about a bit, myself), "Same old place on the North Shore. Sorry you could not have come down for the week-end."

She (suddenly remembering), "We were *so* awfully disappointed, but Freddie was off on a cruise at the time, and, oh, well, you know how busy the summer is. It's so hectic, with the children and all — what was it I was saying?"

I (with renewed enthusiasm), "About the hectic children."

She (turning from the styles to say impressively), "Oh, yes, we wanted you *so*

much to come up for a few days, but the summer was so full up, and Billy had summer grip."

At this point the currents suddenly became surcharged with energy and I found my *vis-à-vis* had vanished, only to be replaced by another with the same vocal result.

After about three-quarters of an hour of this sort of thing, I managed to escape to the coat-room for a cigarette and a breath of air. Freddie happened to be there for the same reason.

"Rotten business this," I remarked.

"Worst kind of mess," he replied. "By the way, I was frightfully sorry we could not come down to your place last month when you asked us. I was keen to go, but Bella had a perfect mania for auction and could not bear to give up a single day with the Cranstons while they were there. We had a hot competition."

"Humph," I thought, "I wonder which is right."

"Well, I guess I'll put on my hat and coat and wait outside." Which I did for some little time, Freddie leaving me for the quiet of his club, the evening paper, and "something" to take the taste of the tea and cake away, as he explained.

On the way home Mrs. Hood attested that it was the most delightful, and by all odds the smartest, tea of the season!

THE NEW STENOGRAPHER

THE NEW STENOGRAPHER

To lose one's secretary is much the same as to lose the power of speech or the use of one's good right arm. It is a form of paralysis, painless, but the occasion of great mental suffering and a total loss of temper. In short, it is a catastrophe of the major order and to the T. B. M. it spells disaster.

To those of the "Pollyanna" class, who are thankful for their blessings and recognize them not only by sight but intuitively, the sun and the moon, the three sensible meals a day, the comfortable bed and congenial friendships are wonders for which they never fail to rejoice, *never*. But to the T. B. M. such matters are taken for granted. It is only when the sun fails to appear, the cook leaves, the bed squeaks, or the friends fail to drop in that he begins to notice the

amenities of life, and then he takes notice with a vengeance and with piteous complaint. And so the departure of his secretary for more fertile fields of pecuniary harvesting brought havoc into his life.

An efficient private secretary is one of the most wonderful products of modern life. She is the grand vizier of modern times, no mere employee or cultivated menial. She is a business helpmate, confidential in all matters pertaining to financial existence, familiar with the innermost recesses of one's business mind and mood, but undemonstrative to an almost inhuman extent and incommunicative to an incredible degree upon any subject other than business. Such is the product of the times when brought to the *n*th power of efficiency. There are, of course, secretaries and secretaries — good, bad, and indifferent; and also there are those who are different, where the personal touch is at

times overdone, even where it stretches toward romance, when the daily routine is fraught with other problems of a less impersonal character, but such occasions are rare in these days. The T. B. M., being a T. B. M., is an automaton in office hours and expects the wheels to revolve at a certain speed from ten to five-thirty daily. This does not occur with the going of Miss P. S. Her going has changed the entire atmosphere of the office.

At first the wheels do not turn at all. Miss N. S., who appeared bright and early one Monday morning, is very pleasant and equally nervous. She had not opened any of the letters for fear of opening some which should remain sealed. This showed a certain amount of common sense and a dash of life's experience, but to the T. B. M. it was a nuisance. After the mail was opened, there came dictation. Now the T. B. M., although a successful and brisk person, does not artic-

ulate as he should; therefore, Miss N. S. was obliged to say "What?" now and then, which necessitated beginning the letter all over again, and every one knows that an interrupted letter is never as terse or as effective as one when the dictator is allowed to run along without interference.

Then there came the struggle with the addresses, which must be secured from the file, an indispensable adjunct to the office of which the T. B. M. knew little. It seemed that Miss N. S. was used to an alphabetical file, while ours was unfortunately numerical. An important and large part of the morning was therefore spent in mastering this detail with the help of both the mail and filing clerks. From the casual remarks which Miss N. S. let drop from time to time as to the simplicity of the alphabetical system, I felt there was something in it, but, apparently, our filing clerk took it as a personal

reflection and consequently I let the matter drop. It seemed wiser, for I did not wish to lose our filing clerk, too.

Among my letters there were one or two which called merely for perfunctory replies, and these I passed over as was my habit without dictating the specific answers, giving the necessary directions. In the case of one, what was my consternation to find that Miss N. S. with a commercial courtesy almost painful had ended the letter as follows —

"Thanking you in advance for past favors, we beg to remain, etc."

That was the high spot in a hectic day. Another eccentricity which I soon discovered was spelling. It is curious how the habit of dependence upon others becomes almost incurable. I am not strong myself in spelling, but as I rarely wrote in longhand it did not matter in the office and Miss P. S.

seldom made a mistake. With my new secretary the basket of letters disclosed a wonderful assortment of misspellings and a total lack of punctuation. I grew nervous. Was "believe" "ie" or "ei"? Should it be "would" or would it be "should"? Was my correspondent's name spelt "Reed" or "Read" or "Reade" or even "Rhead"? I felt limp and discouraged when I arrived home, not only on account of Miss N. S., but because of my own lapses. Was I much of a fellow after all if the simplest venture of the office could not go on because of the departure of my secretary? Would n't it go better if I had left and she had remained? I messed up my brain with such stuff as this until it was time to go to bed and then thrashed about on the same theme for an hour.

The next day a new set of circumstances provided the setting for my leading lady. I had explained that when answering tele-

phone calls she should ascertain the name of the person calling and then let me know who was on the wire. Early in the morning, while I was immersed with my mail, she reported that a "Mr. Stearns" was on the line and wished to speak to me privately. Now as a rule unknown men who wish to consult in private come under two headings — insurance agents and persons asking for charity. Being absorbed in a letter, I replied carelessly that I was busy in a conference and she repeated the message. At lunch I found that the Stearns of the telephone was my stock-broker and friend, Kerns, who had a tip which I was too late now to take.

When it came to the intricacies of my personal accounts, she broke down and cried. If she had not done so I should have fired her, but, of course male-like, I had not the heart to do it on the spot, and instead com-

pleted my own account and remained in town for dinner as the result, later attending one of those musical pieces of bric-à-brac commonly considered as balm to the T. B. M., but which seemed to me to savor of the vintage of the early nineties.

And so it went for a week or two. Miss N. S. mastered the file and consulted the pocket dictionary which I had presented to her the first week. The spelling was better, but in her anxiety on this score she developed a new mania for leaving out words. For instance, in a long letter to our London house I found the following:

"In regard to the Great Northern Lights, there is every evidence that the new issue (First Mortgage Stinking Fund)," etc.

It is probably needless to point out that the "Northern Lights" referred to is "The Great Northern Power and Light Corporation," and that "Sinking" should have replaced the more objectionable word.

At about this time her appearance began to get on my nerves. I had made up my mind beforehand not to allow my personal prejudices to have anything to do with the choice of a secretary. Neither age, beauty, nor the question of dress was to be considered. That was not my business. But I could not wholly escape. I could stand her hair. It had that bushy appearance at the ears that I detest, but still they nearly all do it. But the perfume was unendurable. I cannot tell you whether it was "Mary Garden" or "Susan B. Anthony," but I can smell it to this day. Along with most men of my type, I felt exceedingly reluctant to mention the subject; in fact, I could not bring myself to do it. Instead I kept complaining of the heat and opening the windows. I also spoke of the fragrance of a cigarette, and as a matter of fact, I smoked a good deal more than was good for me.

Finally an inspiration came to me. I went and had a haircut and then bathed my head in bay rum and returned reeking to the office.

"You'll have to excuse me, Miss N. S.," I remarked, as apologetically as possible. "The barber, by mistake, put bay rum on my head. I was reading the paper at the time and it was too late to stop him. I hope you won't mind; it shall never happen again." All falsehoods and all perfect rot, but I believe the thing got through to her brain, for I did not notice the perfume as much after that.

In short, the life of a T. B. M. and his secretary is an intimate affair, and impersonal as may be the relationship it never conceals the eccentricities of each from the other. The T. B. M. is either spoiled or tortured. The secretary is — well, she must confess her own symptoms. Her loss is one of the

chief trials of the T. B. M., just as her going is in an egotistic sense a business triumph for her. But then, what's a secretary or two when compared with taking stock?

A NEAR-FLAPPER

A NEAR-FLAPPER

We were having a children's party. It seemed to me as if we or some one near akin was always having a children's party. I had that feeling, so common to the T. B. M., so disloyal, and yet unintentionally so, that I should prefer going anywhere but home. Yet home I went, drawn irresistibly by a New England conscience and that parting word from my wife that I was expected, and, "Please bring some chocolate cigarettes."

I had the chocolate cigarettes in my pocket, and as I hurried along the incongruousness grew upon me. Why cigarettes! — even if they were chocolate; for the party was for my younger daughter, aged twelve, and the party was exclusively feminine.

"Is this the way to begin?" I pondered. "If so, there is only one end. But even if

there is only one end, what of it? Cigarettes are smoked by girls; not by all, to be sure. Will they smoke less if they do not see smoking at the age of twelve, or not? Will chocolate cigarettes lead more promptly to the real thing?" I gave it up and started to unlock the front door, when it suddenly opened and a raging mob of "near-flappers" with bobbed curls a-flying and spindly black legs gyrating below a mass of fluffy ruffles swarmed upon me, headed by Mary-Bird, my daughter, whose voice rose above the din.

"D'jer get thum?" — "Where are they?" — "Quit it, Peg!" — (this to an associate who appeared equally interested).

I brought forth the package as the easiest method of assuaging their curiosity, and with a "Gee! Thanks, Pa!" Mary dashed off, carrying the cigarettes much as a center rush in football carries the pigskin from an out-of-bounds play.

My mind being still focused on the larger aspects of the case, I continued to observe.

"Gee! are n't they swell!" remarked one little lady, the daughter of a prominent banker, whose wife had contributed several articles to well-known magazines during the past year or two.

"You bet!" remarked another diminutive siren. "They look just like the kind my father smokes."

"My mother's got some in a silver box at home, but they're smaller!" exclaimed a cunning little tot of the quiet, inquiring variety. I knew the species and could picture her at twenty, knowing it all and never giving it away.

"They're simply corking!" rioted a buxom blonde who had outgrown everything she had on and was destined to continue her course if not restrained from sweets.

Then came a measure of silence as these

maidens, culled from society's choicest cloisters, imitated their elders and pretended to puff their cigarettes.

"You see," said my wife, coming up and placing her arm in mine, "Mary-Bird is no worse than the rest."

"There speaks the guilty mind," I replied, smiling. "Who said she was?"

"Well, you always say she talks like a — what is it — gutter-snipe."

"Well, my dear," I inquired innocently, "what does she talk like?"

"I don't know; like the boys, I suppose," replied Sue. "I don't know why it is, but all these girls seem to have a passion for doing just what the boys do. They call each other by their last names. They play football and wear their bloomers upon all possible occasions. Their hands are scrubby, and unless watched by some one each and every little tot would develop into a rowdy with no

manners, but 'all class,' as Mary-Bird would say."

"Well, who's to blame?" I inquired.

"It's just the times," sighed my wife.

"I think, then, we had better put the clocks back a little farther," I replied, straightening my waistcoat as I always do when I think I have made a hit.

In the evening, after the house had resumed its normal appearance and quiet had come with the passing of Mary-Bird, or as her friends now call her, Magpie, to the upper regions, I foolishly took up the subject of the children. It was foolish because we were both tired and the evening after a children's party is not the time to discuss policies. However, I reverted to the cigarettes because they offered a fair target.

"It is not that I am a prig or old-fashioned," I began; "you know that as well as I; nor do I care much about this smoking

business in itself; but what bothers me is the way you blame present conditions on the times." (Here I began to climb one of my hobby-horses.) "It's all very well to blame the times, but the times don't *do* anything. It is the people who act. You and I, and parents in general and particular, are so stupidly easy-going that we allow our youngsters to act pretty much as they please. They who are too young actually set the standards, and we who are too weak to overrule say it is the trend of the times."

Being now well launched, I proceeded out to sea.

"The fact is," I continued, "we tell our children precisely what they should and should not do until they have arrived at the age when they need it most, and then we slink away from our responsibilities and excuse it by saying it is the *times*. This slang, this movie business — simply rotten,

I call it." (Here my wife smiled.) "Yes, you see I get the habit too. Then comes this dancing fad, pagan gyrations, negro music, double hug. The children are perfectly innocent, but we are not, and Old Father Time is named as chaperon. It's ridiculous."

This last, or perhaps it was a dropped stitch in the sweater my wife was knitting, gave the first opening.

"Can I change all this?" she said, too sweetly to deceive me. "Don't I do *anything* for the children?"

"Yes, indeed, you do; we all do. I am glad you put it that way," I replied. "We do altogether too much for them and we say too little. They are completely spoilt by the way parents plan, fetch, and carry for them. The whole summer is laid out ready-made for their enjoyment. Racing with skilled boatmen instead of bitter experience. Picnics with food prepared by mothers instead

of by themselves. Tutors to do the chores as well as to teach. The whole day is planned for, hour by hour, without giving them an opportunity to develop their own resources. In the winter it is more or less the same, as the schools arrange for games, outings, music, and at times even theaters.

"But there is no time or effort made to put a boy or a girl on his or her own until they are ready for college, and then the parent with a comfortable bank account sends his offspring out West for a year, or, in the case of a daughter, to Europe, to gain just that independence and poise which could have been secured at home with less expense and with common enjoyment and understanding if those same children had been left more to themselves."

"It seems to me, my dear, that you have convicted yourself," put in my wife; "first, you say we ought to do more for our kiddies and then you say we do too much."

"What I mean is that we do too much for their enjoyment at the expense of their initiative, and too little bringing up at the expense of their manners while they are in the formative period. So that the new generation — not all, but many of them — will be without resources except for a certain facility at games and without the fine traditions of good breeding which mark the men and women we both admire.

"These boys and girls are of just as good stock, but they are coming to the front at a time when rigid notions of what is polite and thoughtful are considered old-fashioned, and the laxity in manners is shown in the casual way in which the children wear their clothes, leave their rooms, throw their bicycles on the pavement, and eat their meals. What we need is a little of the old-fashioned martinet to bring precision and responsibility to these little joy-riders through life."

"Well, my dear," remarked my wife, folding up her knitting, "I agree with everything you say. I do all I can, and I think that just now is a good time to go to bed."

And thus endeth, as usual, the T. B. M.'s sermon.

THE CHIEF OPERATOR

THE CHIEF OPERATOR

EVERY so often in the world's history, there has come a catastrophe so great as to overwhelm mankind. The Deluge early gave vogue to this sort of thing, Vesuvius performed a rather neat trick, and the London Plague is not forgotten.

For the T. B. M. the telephone strike had much the same effect. It is true that no lives were sacrificed, but think of the time lost forever! And think of the potential business energy and the latent possibilities for "deals" which never materialized! That was what the T. B. M. did think of during those trying days. His mood was accentuated by a slight bilious attack which gave point to every ominous headline indicating no relief in the situation.

As a matter of fact, the T. B. M.'s occupa-

tion and very existence depended upon the telephone. His clients (he preferred that word to customers) were in the habit of transacting their affairs very generally over the telephone, and consequently the office became a morgue of baleful omen, too utterly depressing to be suffered. Goaded by this mental torture, the T. B. M. was determined to see what could be done in the way of self-preservation, a very natural and instinctive action. He determined to go to headquarters, and see for himself just how matters stood.

This visit to the Exchange was only accomplished by skillful and surreptitious references to his friend the Vice-President, and he breathed a prayer for forgiveness and albeit protection from discovery in using the great man's name.

Arriving finally at the operators' room, the T. B. M. was vastly surprised to find a

number of girls working. The place seemed actually busy, although it was quite evident that only a baker's dozen of the hundred operators were actually at their posts. There was a hum and a continual volley of clicks which proved that some patrons were being served. He became hopeful of results. If others, why not he himself, here, Johnny-on-the-Spot?

At a desk in the center of the room sat a young woman of perhaps over-sturdy but not unpleasing appearance, a person of deliberate movement and a certain dignity of carriage. She seemed to dominate the room in a quiet but effective manner which struck the T. B. M. as having "some class" in a time like this.

Approaching with that unmistakable strut of self-consciousness which the male of the species invariably adopts when desiring to make a complete conquest at first sight,

the T. B. M. uncovered his shining bald head and uttered a pleasing if somewhat hackneyed "Good-morning." The young woman was as deliberate in her reply as she was in her actions.

After answering several calls with an appearance of utter indifference, she turned upon our adventurer a pair of blue eyes such as he had rarely seen equaled on either side of the footlights, and said, in the same matter-of-fact tone which she had used when addressing the instrument, "What?"

This was bad business. To be obliged to repeat a vacuous "Good-morning" was not on the cards, and therefore our hero proceeded into action with remarkable agility for a T. B. M.

"Look here, I'm in a beastly mess all on account of this strike, you know," he exploded, tiny beads of moisture gathering on his shining brow. "This is an emergency

and all that sort of thing. Sorry to bother you, and I'm afraid it's against instructions and all the red tape I expect is about the place; but really, don't you suppose you could help me?"

The power here gave out, and in the interval the blue eyes focused, the eyebrows arched, the expression changed to one of concern, and a voice spoke:

"What is the nature of the emergency?"

It was a pleasant voice, but not a cultured one. The enunciation was of the made-to-order type which left one with the suspicion that "Aw, g'wan, you're kiddin' me," would have sounded more natural from the same vocal chords. But the effect was kindly and colored the reply; for our T. B. M. found himself adopting a slightly different tone.

"Business — money — a deal. You understand Miss — er — Miss?"

"Clancy," suggested the operator.

"Miss Clancy. Do you know of any greater emergency during business hours than that?"

This seemed to break the spell, for the eyes, the mouth, and even the nose changed their proportions, and Miss Clancy broke into a hearty laugh which astonished those underlings about her who were purring their replies into space much as a bee whispers to its flowers.

"Well, how did they let such a live wire as you come in through that door without insulation, I'd like to know? Who said you could come in here breaking all the rules of the game?"

The T. B. M. became apologetic at once and explained. At the name of the Vice-President, Miss Clancy pricked up her ears.

"Did *he* give you a pass?" she asked, cocking her head on one side.

"He did not," the T. B. M. admitted. "He does not know I'm here. You won't run and tell him, will you?"

Her reply was cut short by a call on the wire.

"What is the nature of the emergency?" The tone was again the drab matter-of-fact intonation we always associate with telephone operators.

"Accident where?" were the next words, vibrant with a new attention.

"Yes, corner of Eighteenth and Main Streets. Stay on the wire till I get the hospital. I'll report at once."

Then and there took place a remarkable demonstration of accuracy. Within an incredibly short time the city's emergency and several private hospitals were notified of a bad collision at the corner of Eighteenth and Main Streets, and ambulances were directed to the proper place without a wasted word

and with calm accuracy; after which the blue eyes were once more directed at the T. B. M., and with a mischievous twinkle behind them.

"Will I tell? Say, do I look as if I had time to go to the Vice-President and tell him I had a caller?"

"No, of course not; I was wrong, anyway," the T. B. M. hastened to admit. "This message you have just put through shows me I was entirely wrong. My emergency is not like that. I ought not to have asked. I had better just trot along back and wait for things to clear up."

Putting on his hat, the T. B. M. started to go, when his new-found friend stopped him.

"Say, hold on a minute. Just what *did* you want, anyway?"

"Two calls to outlying districts that I feel are urgent."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and then said, "Say, I'll make a trade with you. I won't tell the Vice-President about you, if you don't tell him about me. Number, please?" This last with a twinkle.

The T. B. M. had those two numbers in less than no time, and as a result made a turn well worth the effort. When he had finished, Miss Clancy asked if that was all.

"Well," he replied, "I would like to telephone home to say that I am coming out to lunch and advise the killing of the fatted calf and all that. The number is ——" Here he mentioned the suburb.

At this request Miss Clancy pondered. "I don't believe that exchange will put through a message."

"We might try 'Emergency' there," ventured the T. B. M. timidly.

"I won't, but you can," retorted Miss Clancy. "I'll give you the operator and

see whether she is as easy a mark as I am."

As the T. B. M. said "Hello," and listened for the reply, what was his amazement to hear the familiar voice of his wife asking sweetly the nature of the emergency.

"Why, Sue, dear, it is n't any emergency at all. It's just me, but what are you doing?" he exclaimed.

"Helping out at the telephone exchange," came the reply. "But what made you telephone, and how could you?"

"Just to let you know that I was coming out to lunch — I'll tell the rest later," and rang off.

"Say, what sort of a kid are you, anyway?" inquired Miss Clancy, with a genuine curiosity she could not conceal. "'Sue, dear,' is a pretty cozy way to start. I'll be thinking of telling the Vice-President after all."

"You won't believe it, I suppose, but that was my wife," the T. B. M. hastened to explain, much to Miss Clancy's interest.

"She must be an honest-to-goodness peach to go in as a strike-breaker just to help along. I'm mighty glad I was able to fix you up on her account, and please tell her so from me."

Miss Clancy was immediately reassured on this point.

A few days later "Chief Operator" received a large bunch of violets with a card upon which appeared the following inscription:

"Please do not tell the Vice-President who sent this." The initials which appeared were the T. B. M.'s.

THE ATHLETIC GIRL

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It was the same young girl I had seen almost daily for at least eight years, and yet I had never known who she was or even what her name might be. On my daily walk downtown to the office, she had passed me coming uptown to school. I did not know whether she lived in one of the many houses which border the business district (for, as in all American cities, business is invading our residential quarters with alarming rapidity), or whether she was coming from a suburb.

In either case she was a methodical little puss, for I invariably met her within a block or so of the same point each day, and as we passed I never failed to notice her — T. B. M. that I am, immersed in the problems of how to make four times four net me upwards of

seventeen, just to win out over an old world which still clings to the multiplication table even in these days of tax specialists.

My little unknown friend grew astonishingly with the years. At first she was a slip of a thing, with pigtails and skirts as short as those one sees on the street to-day. Incredibly, it seemed to me, she shot up and broadened into symmetrical girlhood, but always unmistakable with a swinging gait, boyish, athletic, and vigorous. She was never in a hurry, but she was invariably pushing on. There was a drive to her walk which even as a small girl I noticed in its similarity to some engine-driven vehicle. One felt that there was force behind it which pervaded her whole being, and I often wondered what would happen to the man who would some day step in her path.

Her clothes were fashioned by some one akin in spirit to her own breezy nature. She

always wore loose pretty garments; even her shoes were chosen to give full play to her agile feet. Rough homespun suits, a Tarleton plaid, or a serge skirt, appearing beneath an English ulster effect in winter, were all that I remember just now, which after all, you will admit, is something for a T. B. M. But it was all quite easy because of the real individuality of my unknown companion of the pavements. A glance at her fresh, ruddy face, which never failed to bear an expression of expectancy, of pleasurable anticipation, was a tonic in itself. I suppose she would be called pretty. Certainly she was not beautiful, and I fancy she cared not one straw for beauty in the common acceptance of the term; but with her figure, which was quite perfect, with her dark, deep coloring, and light, tawny hair, she was strikingly attractive, and I missed her daily passing a year or more ago, when for some mysterious

reason she no longer crossed my path. I suspected that she had completed her education so far as school is concerned.

Like all T .B. M.s I am a golfer. That does not imply that I play golf, but I play at it, and I assiduously observe true form, having taken lessons on the links, in the athletic stores, on sundry roofs, and in front of my house at the seashore, where I collect pine cones and drive them victoriously into the sea some few yards in front of me. This craze for form has led me of late to follow the professional and other matches about the various golf links with which our suburbs are plentifully supplied. This afternoon I had set aside to see the women's championship match between the East and West, and although there were a number of important matters at the office I felt that health was after all the most important thing, and, therefore, here I was at the first

tee, and there *she* was defending her title to golf supremacy — *the* Miss X, my little schoolgirl still the same! How incredible that she should have acquired in her short life what I with all my hours of patient practice could never accomplish.

I watched her swinging over the course with that driving walk which was but the accompaniment of an athletic poise which showed in every movement of the game, and that expectant, compelling expression, charming and convincing of what character lay behind. Of course she won, and of course I met her after the game was over. In fact, I met her whole family, and I saw to it that my family met hers, and now I plan to watch her development in other branches of sport, for she has the poise, the eye, the figure, and the build of an athlete. I suspect that she deplores her sex, but in these days what matter? What more hopeful sign of our

future race than this extension of the manly sports to our women? If they will *play* the game as it is intended that sport should be played, so much the better for all of us.

THE AUTHORESS

THE AUTHORESS

Now and then, on my way uptown, I drop in to see my old friend Park and try to persuade him to come along with me for a walk or a quiet game of billiards at the club before dinner. Occasionally he falls in with my plans, but generally not. Park is a publisher, and although he won't admit it to me, I consider him a T. B. M.

His contention is that his business is not only his business, but his hobby as well, and for that reason he is at it night and day. I never saw such an enthusiast for work, and yet upon occasions life may drag along with him as with the rest of us.

This particular afternoon in April was uncommonly fine. The air still held the crispness of winter, but with the light glinting over the house-tops on the hill and the

fresh earth smell of April in the air one felt the spring and rejoiced in the liberty from business confinement, and so I thought of Park and determined to pry him away.

Being well known in the office and bent full upon my own idea, I walked past the various supernumeraries and found myself in Park's room before I discovered that he was in conference with a lady.

"Sorry; I didn't know that you were busy," I muttered, starting to withdraw.

"Don't go," replied Park, almost eagerly for him. "Let me present you to Miss Bashford. You know of Miss Bashford, of course."

"Of course," I replied, bowing. "I am delighted to have the pleasure of meeting a real author. It is a rare pleasure for me, for I am not as fortunate as my friend Park here, whose business I have always felt was what his friends would consider a literary spree."

Park shot me a glance which was easy to translate into "You blamed idiot," and I cudgeled my brain to recall just what Miss Bashford had written, but in vain.

"And so you think literature is a spree?" inquired Miss Bashford.

"Well, perhaps not the type of spree which is best defined as orgy," I replied, getting in deeper, "but naturally a business man looks upon books as a pastime, for he never has recourse to them except in his hours of recreation."

"Oh, I see," she murmured. "You only read for recreation?"

"I cannot say I read very much. Now and then I like a rattling good yarn like that cowboy yarn you gave me last week," I said, turning to Park, who was now scowling and evidently regretting that he had asked me to remain.

"I hardly call a cowboy story literature,"

retorted Miss Bashford, "but I suppose it is if Mr. Park published it."

"You must admit, Miss Bashford, that a publisher must prepare his literary menus with an eye to every taste, even that of our friend here, the T. B. M., who reflects, I am sorry to say, the average demand of our public to-day. It is he, who, along with thousands of other T. B. M.s, creates the 'big seller.' Can't you persuade him otherwise while I step out for a moment? There is some one waiting for me about the Lord knows what."

With that he left me alone with Miss Bashford. A wise trick I thought to myself. What the *deuce* did Miss Bashford write, anyway? — not cowboys or khaki, nor could I persuade myself that she had mastered the subtleties of humor or the pathos of love in distress. No, she could not be a novelist, or else she was a damned bad one. Mustering

up my courage, I settled back in my chair and said with an assumption of comfort which I did not feel:

"Well, here we are. You write and I read. We have that in common."

"Ah, but you do not read what I write, do you?" Miss Bashford smiled as she said this, which broke the strength of the blow.

"N-no, I don't suppose I do," I stammered; "but then you really don't write for me to read, do you? That is to say, after what I said about cowboys you would prefer to write for some one who reads — who reads for a better object than to while away an evening."

"I write for those who are searching for Beauty in Life, not necessarily for the soul, although I believe that to attune nature to life there must be kinship between the soul and the intellect. But I write to sound the

rhythm of life and to portray thought — if you know what I mean."

Unfortunately, I did not, and I was mentally gasping in my attempt to grope for an answer.

"It's all very well to portray thought," I replied. "That's what the Cubists wanted to do, was n't it? — or was it the Futurists? In any event they portrayed something that nobody could understand without a chart. Now, Miss Bashford, if you portray a thought, how do you do it without giving the trick away? — I mean without saying in so many words that it is a thought."

"It is very simple. You must have read allegories in your youthful days and your mother or your nurse pointed out to you the moral of the tale. In a way that is what my poetry is, only the allegory is not a fairy story, nor is there a moral. There is in its place a thought which has taken on form

through the medium of the rhythmic words."

"It must be very difficult," I admitted.

"It is, because you see, not only must the poem reflect the thought perfectly, but the rhythm must be in harmony with the spirit of the thought."

"H'm," I remarked. "There are a good many thoughts in this old world of ours and precious little harmony to some of them from what I have observed."

"Yes, that is true," continued Miss Bashford, who never lifted her voice above a low murmur. "But rhythm, harmony, dissonance might all be classified under what I call harmony. The harmony which would accompany an unpleasant or wicked thought would naturally be a jangle of discord which in verse would be expressed in unmetrical stanzas where the choice of words themselves would lend color to the sound."

Her voice trailed off into a lower murmur

as I lost all sense of what she was driving at. I simply watched her spellbound as she dived into the recesses of her agile brain and brought forth bit by bit her fetish, for now I knew her to be so entirely absorbed by her own obsession that it was idle either to try to stem the current of her thought or to counter by such feeble criticism as I could muster.

Miss Bashford was petite, almost pretty, and as she sat there perched upon an office chair, fashionably dressed, girlish in figure, animated in a repressed sense of the word, I wondered at a Fate which had clouded her youth with such a heavy consciousness of intellect, for with all her earnestness and conviction, I could not help feeling that there was a self-consciousness, almost a pose, to the whole thing.

Fortunately, before I was called upon to say more, Park returned and Miss Bashford

left, having deposited a large, bulky manila envelope upon my friend's desk.

"Yes, we will write you within a week," I heard him say to her at the door. "Oh, no, it will be kept in our vault except at such times as it is in the hands of our readers. You may be sure that it will have a sympathetic reading. Good-bye."

"Whew!" — returning to his desk Park flopped into his chair.

"I thought you told me your business was a hobby, Park," I observed.

"Did I? Well, well, fishing is yours, is n't it?"

"You know it is," I replied.

"How much fun did you have when the canoe upset in the upper Cascopedia last spring and you trailed back to the camp nearly frozen?"

"All right, quits! — and get your hat and coat," I returned, laughing and jabbing him

with my cane. "But who is this paragon of versical virtue?"

"Miss Bashford? Oh, she's one of these moderns, who, if she perseveres, will get there simply because she has one fixed idea of a rather novel sort with unlimited nerve and — other resources," remarked Park, somewhat vaguely.

"Oh," I said. "And does she pay the public to read?"

Park roared at this. "They *don't* read them!" he continued; "that is, not yet. In publishing we do a good deal of living in hope. To provide shoe-leather and the other things necessary to the present, we bring out a few cowboy books. Come along, it's time for that game of billiards. Shall it be cowboy?" said Park with a smile.

THE NEW VOTER

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"WHAT do you think of the election, Neal?" I inquired of my friend as we walked downtown the morning after the State election.

"Fine, simply splendid, a walk-over for the whole ticket. Could it be better?"

"No," I replied, "it could n't, and our women apparently did a good job."

"I should say they did," he continued, bubbling. "They took no party lines as far as I can see — just voted for the right man. You will find their hearts are in the right place."

"Yes, I know," I answered musingly; "that's just it. Their hearts are all right; what bothers me sometimes is their heads. In this election sentiment, common sense and the welfare of the community were all on one side, with nothing but a party ma-

chine and the unknown quantities of Labor and Religion on the other. Personally I don't know much about underground politics, but I suspect that Labor and Religion do not control as many votes as we are often led to expect."

"Well, what's that all got to do with the woman vote?" asked my friend.

"Just this. Most women will listen to what some man has to say about the vote. Tradition is strong in women. They will very often choose the ticket their fathers, brothers, or husbands vote, and nearly always the party to which their sweethearts belong."

"Maybe you're right as to fathers and sweethearts, but I'll bet a box of Belindas that wives and husbands will be on opposite sides of the fence more often than not," remarked Neal sagely.

"The thing simmers down to this," he

continued. "The women have an ideal. Sometimes it may be one man, then it is spelt *idol*, but at others it is a cause, a theory, or what-not. Pure milk, clean streets, better air, filtered water, and up jumps some four-flusher with a sweet voice who wants to be It and espouses one of these ideals as his own. He discovers it, sings it from the rostrum, works every sort of variation on the theme, with no more belief in it than a patent-medicine vender."

"I know," I interjected, wanting to talk; but my friend continued, disregarding me:

"That sort of chap will lead them every time. You will find your own orations at home falling upon deaf ears. He may be a jailbird. If so, your wife will make him out a martyr. He may have been previously elected to some high office where he failed. She will tell you it was because he did not have a chance, and so it will go."

There was no further chance to talk, as we had reached his office, where I left him.

Returning that evening rather earlier than usual, I found a group of my wife's friends talking over the election. That they were pleased with the result was of course apparent. The conversation had passed beyond that point. The matter in hand was to present to our new Governor a programme of what I should call Betterfication of the State. These ladies were actually drawing up a list of their combined ideals of governmental improvements to submit at the proper time.

As my friend had remarked, pure milk was on the list. So was a plea for better roads. One angular lady of more advanced years was recommending better lighting of roads in certain quarters of the city. Another was focusing her strength upon the Housing Problem. In short, the housewife

had her broom, a large, new broom, with which to sweep the city and State clean. She was regardless of what came under city rule and what under State, and she had forgotten all about the Federal Government in her excitement for change.

I thought to myself, what sort of fate lies before these new officials with their limited powers, their lobby and their laws, to say nothing of their appropriations? That oft-repeated and super-hackneyed term, "my constituents," had now another meaning, for the women's vote will be loudly heard in the land, and woe be to him who does not perform the superhuman act of making of the world a Spotless Town.

So think I, the T. B. M. Perhaps I am wrong. I know very little, at least so I infer at times from the remarks of my children and the expression in my wife's eyes.

THE DÉBUTANTE

THE DÉBUTANTE

In the olden time, the Seven Wise Men were looked upon with veneration both for their age and knowledge. Now there is no such thing as real veneration, and knowledge seems to be with the young rather than the old. At least so I am told by the coming generation, who have come with a vengeance, and no class in these days come with more assurance or more self-reliance than the Débutantes. If we read our Thackeray, we realize what tender blossoms those dear young ladies really were, safe in the realm of their ancestral abodes. In our vernacular they were all innocent, clinging vines, helpless but winsome. In those days women were enshrined for the adoration of mankind.

In our fathers' and mothers' day there was more of practical life up to the age of

wooing. Simplicity and merriness were factors in the attraction of both sexes. The piazza still had its uses; the days of husking-bees had passed, but the community spirit still remained, and parties and balls were given and enjoyed by a company of real friends, and the Débutante who received her guests was a girl unspoiled and eager for wholesome pleasures.

But to-day the Débutante is full mistress of her powers and freer in many cases than her male peers, who are still grinding away at college. She is more mature than he, and she knows just about as much about life as he does and thinks a great deal more about it than he ever imagines. She has been used to motors and luxuries of every sort provided by fond parents more fortunate than wise, and she is not limited in her vision to the town or city of her birth, but flits about choosing her friends from kindred spirits,

and she has fallen upon an ill time — a time when prohibition has made hypocrites of men and women alike, when laws are broken by those we respect, and the Débutante naturally argues that if some laws are broken, why not others? In short, she is in the way of doing pretty much as she pleases and finds justification in the actions of those whose lives touch hers.

A few years ago, when the term "the emancipation of women" was first heard in the land, it applied to the outdoor movement when girls began to take an active part in sports. It was a good thing. There quickly developed a proficiency in golf and tennis which was surprising. Then girls were included in camping expeditions, and horsemanship, fishing, and sailing soon brought to light the latent efficiency of many girls and women in outdoor activities. From this has arisen a feeling of comrade-

ship between the sexes, which never before existed; but with it has come a freedom of expression and the adoption of habits and manners which, to say the least, would have amazed those gentle creatures of Thackeray's fancy. The slang of the average American girl to-day would rejoice the heart of a George Ade and cause Mr. Dooley to reflect "wance more on the times." The cigarette-maker knows his wares are enjoyed by both sexes with equal relish, and Mr. Ziegfeld's astounding revelations and revolutions in dress have invaded the ballrooms to such an extent that the musical comedies have been obliged to return to nature in order to achieve success.

Our Débutante is well up in all the books of the type which lay hidden a generation ago, and what is more she talks about them. In short, she knows so much that it is the wonder of the time that she really knows so little.

It was at a ball that the T. B. M. first met the Débutante. Sue insisted that we take in certain functions in order not to become archaic and to keep in trim for the children. We had been in the ballroom for some little time before our attention was drawn to her. She had just passed us dancing cheek by jowl with an athletic, good-looking chap, whose expression of dignity and serious contemplation admirably camouflaged what must have been his inner feelings at such close proximity to feminine beauty. The T. B. M. did not approve of this latest fashion in dancing. He admitted that it was undoubtedly devilish good fun, but devilish, and, therefore, to be avoided, and he wondered why on earth the matrons did not wake up and sense the thing.

Miss Deb, it seemed, was a daughter of a classmate, who insisted upon introducing him and arranging for a dance.

"Will you really dance with an old man like me?" This politely and gallantly from the T. B. M.

"Sure, come on," replied the delicate creature, snuggling closely against him, and off they went.

"Is n't this music simply peachy!" murmured Miss Deb against his shirt bosom.

"You bet," replied the T. B. M., trying to catch the lingo.

"You're not at all bad, you know; let's twinkle," added Deb. So they twinkled until interrupted by a claimant for the rest of the dance.

The next time the two met was in the following summer when the T. B. M. was spending a week-end with his classmate at the seashore. Miss Deb was playing singles with the same handsome, athletic young man and apparently beating him when the motor brought our friend to the house. The

match was a hot one, so that after it, the pair in bathing-suits, which matched admirably in style and brevity, took a plunge in the sea, and then sat upon the raft and swung their legs to and fro while talking — incessantly — until my friend took the megaphone and shouted "dinner" to them. The meal was a hurried one, for Miss Deb had planned to motor ten miles to a movie show, and then take in the last part of a dance before bedtime.

That was a year ago. Last week, in a trim blue suit and still with the same swinging gait and the same self-assurance, Miss Deb called upon me at my office to ask if there was any vacancy in my staff which she could fill.

I, T. B. M. and Innocence itself, asked what the trouble was.

"Oh, no trouble at all," she replied. "I've nothing to do, that's all, and it's getting on my nerves."

"Nothing to do!" I exclaimed; "what's the matter with what you did last year?"

"Oh, well, I'm fed up with dances and teas, and besides all the girls are getting jobs now," she said lightly.

"You mean it's the thing to do," I hazarded.

"Quite," she replied.

"Where's our blond athlete?" I ventured.

"Married. Did n't you get a bid?" she asked with utter unconcern.

"Yes." I remembered now that I had, and that he had married a demure little girl who lacked the lustrous qualities of my visitor, but who, I suspected, had poise and common sense.

"That's it," I ejaculated out loud.

"What's it?" inquired Miss Deb.

"Poise and common sense and equanimity. You girls are testing the extremes of life and you are losing the perspective of your careers.

You lack balance and you race up and down the tilt of life trying to find it. Don't go so far either way, and you will find it easier to keep your balance. If you can't do it alone, get some one else; it sometimes balances easier with two."

Miss Deb looked at me a little doubtfully, and I rose.

"I guess you're busy," she murmured. She shook hands and left without waiting for her job.

A NEIGHBOR ONCE REMOVED

A NEIGHBOR ONCE REMOVED

EVERYBODY, of course, has colds. One of our neighbors who is a wag, after a prolonged siege of family illness, remarked to me at the club at luncheon, "In certain families there is some one who has a cold all the time, and in others they all have a cold some of the time, but in my family we *all* have colds all of the time." Perhaps it was the thought, or perhaps my friend uncaged one of his flock of family germs. At any rate, that night I started in with a chill, and the next morning one of my loudest colds was in full eruption. I say loudest because, unfortunately, I have never acquired the skill to camouflage a sneeze. Every so often I would celebrate the arrival of a cold with a Presidential salute of twenty-one — or more — guns, every one of which threatened to take my head off.

This particular cold was poorly placed, for

I had a dinner engagement which I wished earnestly to keep. It was a monthly dinner of a dozen or so of my classmates, and upon this particular occasion Bob Coggeshall, who had just returned from a year in Serbia, was to join us, and we had planned a sort of jubilee meeting which I knew would be joyous. Therefore I arose and crawled to the office.

"I don't see why you attempt to go in town, dear," Sue said in a pleading tone.

"I don't know why any man ever goes in town these days," I replied bitterly, thinking of the "market" and the empty days of the last three months, but also knowing that if I did not go to the office Sue would forbid the dinner, and so in I went.

As luck would have it, the cold acquired speed and strength, and at lunch Freddie pronounced it a magnum, and I caved in and went home. Of course that ended the dinner

for me, even without argument. There might, however, have been an argument if Sue had been at home, for she would have said that I could not go to the dinner, and I should then have attempted to prove that I could. After having established that fact, I should have gone on, however, to admit that I was n't going.

Sue was out, which simplified the situation, so I put on an old coat and slippers and ensconced myself in a comfortable chair before the fire in my library, having sought for an opiate of Oppenheim stories and found it. There is one comfort in a cold. It is the one disease I know of where comfort and ease can be appreciated and really enjoyed. One can smoke, even imbibe with moderation, with the sense of doing the right thing at the right time; and one need not go to bed. So I solaced myself with these thoughts and prepared for a cozy afternoon.

I had, however, scarcely started my book when the outer door opened, bringing a draft which made gooseflesh of my complexion, and the next moment a velvet headpiece projected itself through the open door, disclosing beneath a heavily veiled face and a much-be-ulstered figure.

"Heavens! is it you?" exclaimed the face and veil. "Why, what are *you* doing here at *this* time of day?"

At being thus interrogated in my own house, I explained.

The veil was pushed upward, and I saw the familiar features of Mrs. Wynne, one of our neighbors, who was like some cousins we speak of hopefully as once removed. Mrs. Wynne had at one time lived on the opposite side of the street, but as the state of her health demanded that she spend her time in the waiting-rooms of a variety of specialists, she, and, I need hardly add, her husband

and her four children, had removed to town.

"I was out here lunching with the Bennetts and thought I would drop in a moment to see Sue," she explained.

"Sue is out, I am sorry to say," I replied gravely, "but won't you sit down?"

"I can only stay a minute, anyway. I'm awfully disappointed not to find Sue. How is she?"

Then followed one of those minutes which the T. B. M. knows so well — those spun-out minutes when conversation becomes interminable, the long prayer of society, the voicings of endless vacuities. Such minutes are generally spent at the front door with the door open, but on this occasion I was spared the open door.

"You've got a cold. Oh, I *am* sorry, but I can tell you *just* what to do." She did — but I did n't do it.

Foolishly, in reply I asked her how she was.

"Well, I hardly know," she replied, settling back to give full justice to the subject. "Do you know that since we moved in town I think my asthma has been better. Dr. Jenkins felt that it came from the fall dampness. It was not brought on by rose-cold or hay-fever, or any of those things that I thought of while here, but simply by the general dampness coming from the ground after the sun had set. He has told me to keep on the pavements, and to always be at home by five in October and half-past four in November. It *is* hard to keep strictly to this rule, but I do it nearly every day and I am really better. Not *entirely* all right, you understand. Heavens, no! I don't suppose I ever shall be — but still it is encouraging to feel that you are on the right road at last!"

I hastily agreed. "You'll soon be all over it, I am quite sure," I remarked soothingly.

"Perhaps, but if it's not one thing it's

another," Mrs. Wynne replied impressively, to which I bowed in appreciation. "Yes," she continued, "no sooner had I ferreted out the source of this asthma trouble, which, as you know, has bothered my throat and nose and hearing, oh, so miserably, than I had the most awful shock! I was sure that it was" (here she lowered her voice) "*heart*, but after an exhaustive examination by Dr. Leeds (you know Dr. Leeds; he is by far the most celebrated heart doctor in the city — some say in this country), *he* said that the trouble came from indigestion. Of course *that* was a relief."

"Of course," I echoed, breathing noisily through one nostril, hoping to frighten her into leaving.

"But it did not mean that I should not have another palpitation, so I made up my mind to bant, which I did for two weeks, and *then* I was so abjectly miserable that I went

to see Dr. Hawkins, and *what* do you suppose he said?" Here Mrs. Wynne sat up, head up, resembling certain canine specimens anticipating largess in the form of a cracker.

"Blest if I know," was the best I could muster.

"*Eyes!* Eyes, he said, were probably at the root of the whole trouble, and I can see it all. The eyes were probably affected by my asthmatic trouble, and the development has been slow."

"Hello, you two here!" The voice of my wife never sounded sweeter as she came into the room drawing off her gloves and with a cool touch on my brow expressed the message of sympathy for my cold and for the ordeal through which I was passing.

"Why, Wynny dear, how nice of you to drop in! I'm so sorry I was out," she said cheerily, and I am sure truthfully. "Do

come into the other room and tell me all about yourself. We have n't met for ages." And turning to me with the faintest drop of an eyelid, "You poor dear, you must stay right here as close to the fire as you can and mother that cold. I know Mrs. Wynne will excuse you."

And stay there I did, while the murmur of voices told me of a repetition of the symptoms with embellishments not to be recorded in these pages.

SISTER

SISTER

We were sitting alone, my wife and I, over a crackling fire in the library. The crisp fall days had come and with them an exhilaration in mind and body. We were in love with our country, our home, and our children — although an evening without the latter, I must confess, was not unwelcome.

Being a T. B. M., my slippered feet were raised high upon the fender and the evening paper lay half-read upon my knees. This was the real thing to me, and, pulling comfortably at my pipe, I said so to Sue.

"It *is* comfy," she admitted. "I wonder why we don't do it oftener."

And that for some reason or another set me thinking of Harriet. Harriet is my sister, and the exact reverse of what I choose to think I am, although Sue says we have much in common.

"Have you seen Harriet lately?" I asked.

"No, but I don't have to see her to know what she is doing. Look at this," she said, spreading before me two large, square, printed announcements, which had evidently just arrived in the mail. One was an invitation to a Charity Ball in town, with a formidable array of patronesses, in which the name of Mrs. J. Gardiner Halsey figured both as patroness and as guiding spirit.

"Here's another," continued Sue, planting before my gaze the notice of a current events class to be held at the home of Mrs. J. Gardiner Halsey upon Wednesday afternoons.

"Did you read yesterday's social column?" inquired Sue with a twinkle in her eye. "If not I'll get it for you," which she did.

In the center of the page was the repro-

duction of a fashionable photograph of a woman of perhaps forty, smart, well-coiffured, without being really handsome, but with a keen, intelligent expression tending to firmness. Beneath it were the words, "Mrs. J. Gardiner Halsey, whose eldest daughter, Miss Muriel Halsey, is prominent among this season's buds."

In another column was a short paragraph to the effect that Mrs. J. Gardiner Halsey was giving a tea for her daughter, Miss Muriel Halsey, and her cousin, Miss Elsie Wilmot, at the Priscilla Club on the twenty-seventh of the month.

"No wonder I have n't seen her," laughed Sue.

"Have we got to see her?" I ejaculated. "How many of these blame things am I expected to attend?"

"None, if you strenuously object. But I should think you ought to go to the tea.

She's your only sister, and besides the Lady Next Door will be there, you know," added Sue.

"Well, even if I don't go, I suppose I shall have to send flowers to Muriel and buy tickets for the other shows. Harriet is a very expensive family luxury."

"She certainly is," replied Sue pensively. "I never knew any one who thinks up so many things that other people have to pay for. It has almost become a disease since the war."

Just then the outer door slammed and a cheerful feminine voice called, "Any one at home?" It was Harriet.

She fairly blew into the room. Not in a slangy sense, but the very breeziness of her personality wafted her here and there and always to the accompaniment of good humor and high spirits.

"Well, you delightful Darby and Joan!

This scene resembles a golden wedding anniversary. How are you bearing your solitude?"

I took my feet grudgingly from the fender and arose and greeted my sister as only a T. B. M., or possibly a Harvard sophomore, can.

"Well, how on earth did you get here at this time of night?" asked Sue. "We've only just finished reading of your latest achievements," pointing to the paper.

"I just walked over," replied Harriet, throwing off her sport coat. "It was such a perfect night I could not stay in, and besides I wanted some advice."

I moved uneasily at this. Advice meant work and I scented danger ahead.

"The district nurse is leaving. Did you know it, Sue? Well, it seems they have n't paid her enough and there is no town fund to take care of this important service. If some-

thing is n't done, we can't have any nurse out here this winter, and I think something ought to be done."

"Yes, you naturally would," I admitted.

"It is n't the easiest thing in the world to solicit money just now," she continued. "All these drives have exhausted the community, and what with poor business and taxes, people are not giving as they did."

"No, they can't," I managed to interject.

"Therefore, to raise the necessary sum we must give them something for their money. Get up something or other, and that is what I came over to talk about."

"I hardly think we could be very helpful with ideas, Harriet," said my wife; "we are so quiet here."

Not any too quiet for a T. B. M., I thought, but aloud I replied

"Harriet, I know perfectly well that you have it all framed up. What's your idea?"

"It's a play," said Harriet lightly. And I groaned aloud as I sank back in my chair.

"You see we have had all the concerts and lectures that people will stand, and fairs and bazaars must be saved for the church, so my idea was to get up a play with only a small cast, just the people here in town, and no one will refuse to buy tickets for a play with home talent, even if they won't enjoy it. You'll take part, brother of mine, for the sake of the cause and for my sake, now won't you?"

There then ensued an argument and discussion which is too painful to set down upon paper. Needless to say, Harriet won over Sue and Sue browbeat me into yielding with the worst possible grace.

After the die was cast, Harriet lost no time, but, jerking on her coat while protesting what a good old sport I was, breezed her way out as she had come. At the open door,

however, she turned and called back: "By the way, don't forget the bridge party Friday night. The Brandons are coming out from town for the week-end and they are counting on seeing you." The door slammed and I looked up at my wife with haunted eyes, my head bowed between my shoulders.

"Amateur theatricals at my age!" I groaned.

"Nonsense, it will do you good; make you forget yourself and business too," she replied, patting my head as if I were a little child.

"If Harriet had only remained in town or gone South for the winter!" I sighed.

"Tush! She's your sister," answered Sue, putting up the fender as a prelude to bed.

TOPSY-TURVY

Topsy was our cook; she was not colored. I have expostulated to my wife on several occasions that she was not even a cook, and the proof of my remarks was literally in the pudding; but as my wife invariably reminded me of the several occasions when we were without even the semblance of a cook, and as neither of us possesses those admirable qualities which consist of cruising about the pantry and dishing up something perfectly delicious out of the remains of nothing at all, we felt the loss horribly. We, therefore, put up with Topsy with equanimity and we paid her regularly each week a large proportion of our slender savings.

Our life was divided into three distinct parts, as it concerned Topsy, — those evenings when we dined quietly at home *à deux*,

when we entertained assisted by Topsy, and when we dined out, — and it may be safely asserted that when we went out so did Topsy.

Our dinners at home did not represent that charming picture of Darby and Joan well known to those who are not so thoroughly immersed in the latest development of art as to scorn old-time favorites. The painting of Darby and Joan has been reproduced many times, and may be purchased in the art sections of department stores. It shows a table laid for two, heavily laden in fact, and rich glass and china adorn the fleckless linen, and decanters are shown upon the table. It is a fine tribute to the amenities of the mid-Victorian era so scoffed at by twentieth-century débutantes. At this table are Darby and Joan, now grown old and gracefully so through an era of plenty and comfort. Being a T. B. M., I feel old, and as I look upon this picture I am tired, for the quiet,

the comfort, the luxury, and the peace of this evening meal fill me with a hopeless sort of feeling that I have been checkmated by being born to an era of dislocation of all the traditions so dear to the epicure, and therefore the T. B. M. is more vulnerable at mealtimes than at any other. No, the picture of Darby and Joan in no way illustrates our home dinner. My wife and I sit, to be sure, *vis-à-vis*, across a splendidly substantial mahogany table, which was one of our wedding gifts, and each of us is seated in a chair worthy of Sheraton, also wedding gifts; but on the table, placed there noisily by Topsy, is a plate of veal loaf, some warmed-over macaroni, a few leaves of salad which look as if they had been used as the outer covering of what might once have been a head of lettuce, before the chickens had secured the heart, and enough bread and butter for eight people.

It must be admitted that Mary, our waitress, was out. But the only difference would have been that no salad would have been served, and less bread in evidence, so that we may count ourselves as the gainers.

My wife always explained such meals as being merely the odds and ends, but I noticed that they invariably came on to the table upon days when she had gone to a sewing-circle luncheon where whipped cream had played a prominent part. However, we both console ourselves with the thought that we have saved money.

The expense, however, was brought up to a handsome average by the little dinners which we gave to friends who had been kind enough to invite us to dine with them. It was only by purchasing delicacies that we were able to offset Topsy's quaint caricatures of cooking.

I remember one dinner a few weeks ago

when we had invited certain friends whose ménage slid along noiselessly as if on greased tracks. We had ventured upon oysters which I had purchased and had had opened at the fish store. What was our horror when Mary served the soup first and the oysters next. The following morning, when my wife took up the subject in the kitchen, Topsy asserted, and vehemently so, that Sue was all wrong. Soup came before fish, and she proceeded to prove her case by quoting from her cook-book. No power could shake her conviction that we were wrong, and Sue was so fearful that there would be a repetition that we have forsworn oysters ever since. Upon those rare occasions when we entertained — what a misused term — my mental condition reminded me of those unforgettable pictures of the Inferno drawn by Doré which, encased in ornate bindings, adorned the center table of our middle-Victorian

relatives. It was upon such occasions that Topsy revealed her artistic temperament. On another occasion when we were having friends who entertained lavishly, Topsy sent in the soup — a pureé of green peas, with a maraschino cherry daintily poised upon the whipped cream. The color scheme was admirable, but my mental apparatus failed to keep my conversational ability upon the high level which a cocktail and caviare had successfully launched. I knew that my wife would suffer throughout the entire meal, wondering what was going to take the place of the cherries planned for a finishing touch to the dessert. She need not have worried, however, for Topsy's ingenuity was spent by the time the dessert appeared minus any adornment whatever.

Our family Thanksgiving dinner came off without a hitch owing to the forethought of my mother-in-law. My wife had herself

proudly made a mince pie, having been goaded to do so by that oft-repeated phrase about mother's pies. She had instructed Topsy to heat it just a bit to take the chill off. Topsy, mindful of the request, placed the pie in the oven and then promptly forgot it until the hour destined for its appearance. Topsy's sobs as she viewed the charred remains were heard by us at table. My mother-in-law, wise in all things except grandchildren, had brought a mince pie with her according to a time-honored custom, and so once again the pie that mother made was our refuge and delight.

When it came to Christmas and the attendant problems, we decided to omit the usual gifts among the members of the family. What with eggs at $1.20 per, clothes at $85.00 a suit, Billy's shoes at $9.00, servants at figures which I dare not mention, and taxes, taxes — Christmas gifts seemed, to

say the least, a frill. Furthermore, there was nothing much left in the bank, and the persistency of the good-looking girls with those fatal badges who literally storm the business section of the city had emptied my pockets successfully. My wife and I became firm, therefore, in our resolve not to give each other presents on Christmas Day.

And then the week before Christmas came. Certain exceptions to the rule loomed large. "Could we omit my own mother, who invariably came to the rescue at critical times with a welcome check?" No, I put my foot down. She must have something, if only a plant. A plant was ordered. Then, of course, the children. They were to have their Christmas as usual, and we found that the usual meant in cash a fifty per cent increase. There was my wife's maiden aunt, who always knitted something for every one and then got the beastly things mixed.

Last year I received a pair of bed socks intended for my brother-in-law's baby. However, she must have something useful, and a hot-water bottle was done up in white paper with yards of red ribbon and the usual Red Cross stamp affixed; and so it went until the table was piled high. It seemed to me that there was no abatement in the number of gifts, although I was told the cost was trifling.

Finally it came to the servants, and here my wife was adamant.

"If we want them to stay we must do something handsome." Well, what was handsome? That was the question, and we fell back upon the old argument which invariably puts me into a temper. "We must do what everybody else does," stated my wife firmly.

This apparently consisted of giving to each maid $5.00 in cash from me, something

from each child, and a dress or a muff or some article of attire from my wife.

It made no difference how long the maid happened to have been an inmate of our home or whether she was adequate. That had nothing to do with the case, and as usual I had nothing to say about it. In fact, I had nothing to say about the servants that ever had the slightest effect, although I talked at length upon the servants, touching upon the relative high cost of domestic service in comparison with the price of labor in other fields of endeavor. I pointed out not once, but, several times — my wife claims I have said it a hundred times, but she exaggerates — that a domestic, when one reckons her board and lodging, is recompensed at a higher rate than teachers, for instance, who have full charge of the education of our next generation, or of certain types of bank officials who are responsible for thousands of dollars. I

likened them to this, that, and the other wage-earner until my wife pointed out that my remarks had nothing whatever to do with the matter, as Mrs. Mortimer J. Mortimer, who lives next door, paid two dollars a week more to her cook than we do, and Mrs. P. Van Vandergrift, who lives on the other side, paid one dollar a week more for her waitress, and that, therefore, we were actually saving money. Then the argument ceased.

And so when Christmas morning came, I found myself in the usual mental condition of feigning joy over the receipt of a necktie which I secretly swore to exchange the next day, a pair of silk socks two sizes too small, a blotter, and one or two useless knickknacks for my desk, and, thank God, the usual box of Coronas from my roommate.

"You must go and wish the maids a Merry Christmas," cautioned my wife; and so I

made my way kitchenward, preparing a little speech calculated to arouse loyalty and affection.

The speech was received with a stolid indifference, and I added to it by inquiring of Topsy whether she had received all the plunder she expected.

Yes, it appeared, she had. She showed me the fur my wife had given to her, and which I hoped to be able to pay for in January, a five-pound box of candy from a "cousin" (we only received a pound). It is curious how many cousins — and useful ones at that — one's servants possess. Topsy received a number of other gifts which cost more than any of the things I had conferred upon my relatives. And as I was going she said, "I got fifty dollars from a friend; was n't he the generous one?" I acquiesced.

A swift calculation brought me the conviction that Topsy's gifts totaled about

$100, while my own, with the exception of the cigars, had netted me about five.

"It's Topsy's world now," said my wife.

"The world is Topsy-Turvy, you mean," was my reply.

THE END

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